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Food and Home Notes

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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FOOD SAFETY:

SALMONELLOSIS CASES CONTINUING TO ESCALATE

Salmonellosis--one of the major food-borne illnesses affecting man--has been reported in increasing numbers in recent years, according to a National Salmonellosis Seminar held at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Two and a half million people were affected by salmonella in 1976 with many reported deaths according to the Center for Disease Control, U.S. Public Health Service. Many cases are not even reported because people assume that they have had an upset digestive problem or a case of the "flu bug."

What are some of the reasons that salmonella is showing up more--instead of less? We are eating out more than ever before, often unsanitary conditions exist in quantity cooking (church dinners, etc.) and many homemakers are not aware of the problems involved with handling food safety at home. While part of the problem of salmonellosis may be before the food reaches the consumer, the handling of the food in the home is extremely important and one that most consumers can correct daily.

Salmonella are a group of bacteria, almost worldwide in distribution. They may be found even in water..or poultry, meat and meat products, eggs and egg products, fish, shellfish and oysters. Freezing does not kill salmonella; it only prevents multiplication. Strict sanitation measures should be followed because cleanliness in food handling is the most important way to prevent the bacteria from being carried.

Preventing food poisoning from salmonella is based on four principals: cooking foods thoroughly and serving them hot; preventing recontamination of foods through cleanliness and use of sanitary utensils; prompt cooling or freezing of foods after preparation to retard the multiplication of all bacteria; and full reheating of stored foods to destroy bacteria. Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold....and live longer in good health.

THINK

FOOD

SAFETY!

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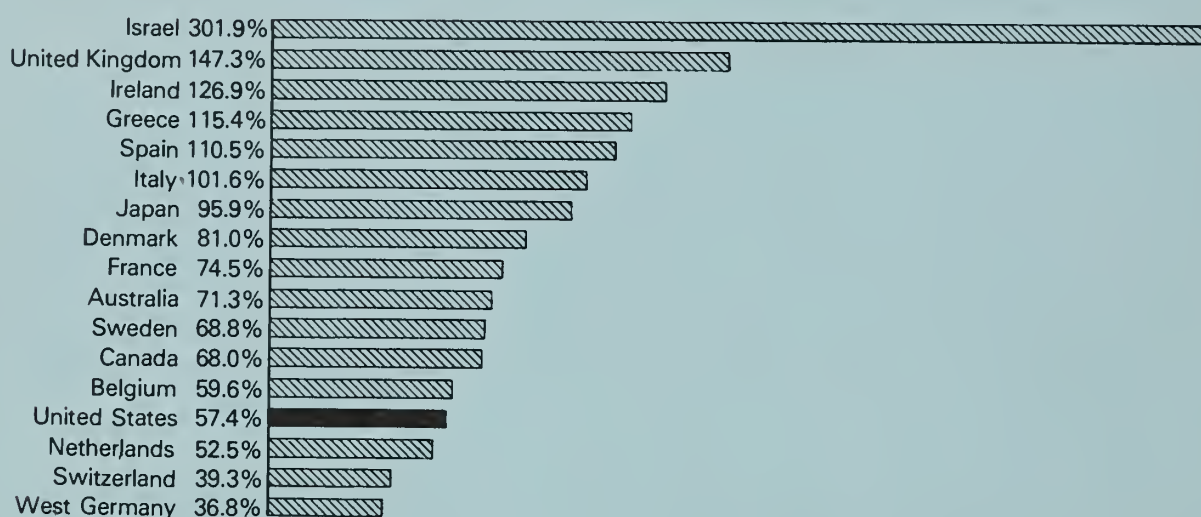
USDA 122-78

CONSUMER PRICES

During the seventies, food prices have risen more slowly in the United States than in nearly any other country. Only in 1973 and 1974 did U.S. food prices rapidly escalate--14 percent each year. Since then, the food price rise has slowed, increasing only 3 percent from 1975 to 1976.

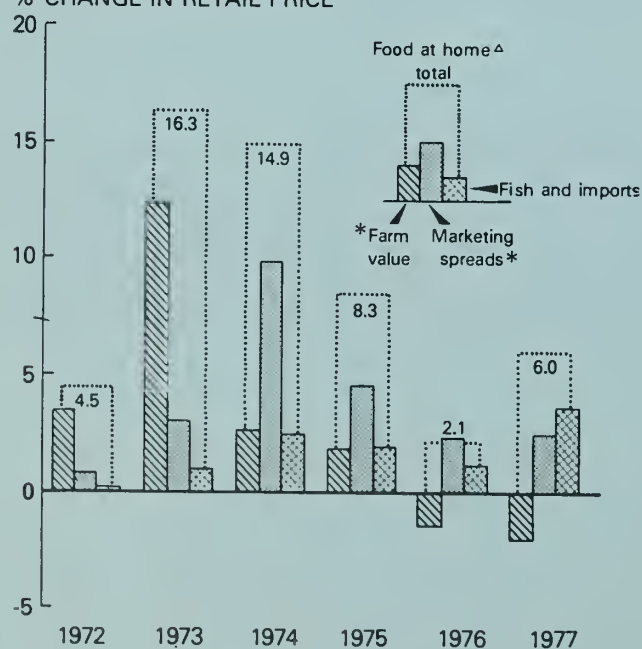
About three-fifths of the 1977 increase in grocery store food prices here at home is coming from higher prices for coffee and other imported foods and fish. Led by coffee, prices of imported foods and fish are expected to average over a fourth higher than in 1976. In contrast, retail prices for a market basket of U.S. produced farm foods are expected to average less than 3 percent above the 1976 level.

PERCENTAGE INCREASES IN FOOD PRICES, 1970-76



CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMPONENTS TO INCREASES IN FOOD STORE PRICES

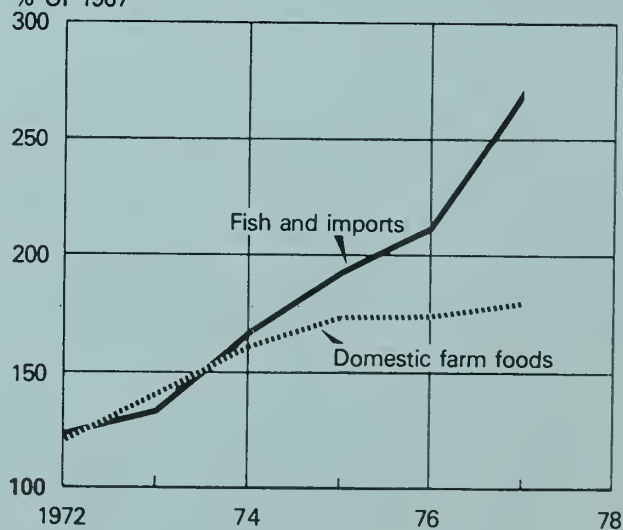
% CHANGE IN RETAIL PRICE



△ FOOD AT HOME INDEX, BLS * MARKET BASKET OF FOODS FROM U.S. FARMS. 1977 FORECASTED

FOOD PRICES: DOMESTIC AND IMPORTS

% OF 1967



MOST ALL ABOUT

— OKRA

Okra is primarily a southern vegetable garden plant. It grows upright and its an annual with a main stem and several branches. It's susceptible to frost but can tolerate hot weather....and it will grow anywhere that cotton will grow, according to the Science and Education Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Sometimes okra is called "gumbo", although that name is more commonly related to soups and other dishes containing okra. Both names are of African origin...."gumbo" is believed to be a word derived from a plant in the Congo.

The young tender pods of okra are popular in Creole cookery and in stews and soups, but it may be boiled, fried or even baked, according to Southern cooks who often dip the sliced pods in meal before frying. Okra---it goes well with tomatoes---is considered a staple food in many areas.

The seed from the okra contains 25 percent protein and 15 percent oil. Homeowners can raise okra and make flour right from the seed. Commercially it is often used as an additive to wheat flour which also adds protein to the product.

Okra, according to legend, was cultivated in Egypt for hundreds of years, and then taken by the Moslems from the East in the 7th century. It apparently reached India and then it is assumed that the French colonists somehow discovered it to bring to Louisiana in the early 1700's. It was being grown as far north as Philadelphia in 1748. Jefferson said it was known in Virginia before 1781 and from about 1800 onward numerous garden writers had something to say about it; and good cooks marveled at its versatility.

The okra flower is a single, showy type resembling the cotton flower with its wide corolla and is usually made up of five yellow or cream-colored petals. The flower opens shortly after sunrise and remains open until about noon. The petals in the afternoon usually fall the following day. Okra is not wind pollinated; it is freely visited by honey

(Continued on p. 4)

OKRA (CON'T)

and bumble bees. The plant develops rapidly in areas that are suited for it...in about two months. (It grows well in the south and in some of the valleys of California.)

In a pound of okra you'd be able to figure about 130 calories, protein 7.2 grams, fat 0.8 gram, carbohydrate 29.6 grams, calcium 328 milligrams, phosphorus, iron, vitamin A, and water content 89.8 percent.

Scientists in a cooperative agreement at the University of Puerto Rico with the U.S. Department of Agriculture are conducting a one year study of the plant and evaluating the okra seed as a new tropical grain crop because it has been discovered that it will grow in both dry and wet tropics. Scientists will determine farming techniques best for okra seed production and will evaluate the quantity and quality of yields and the size, density and oil content of different varieties. They will also study the types and extent of damage to okra by insects and fungi.

PLENTIFUL DAYS

...FOR POTATOES

January supplies for potatoes are plentiful. According to U.S. Department of Agriculture marketing specialists, the demand for potatoes has been generally slow during December so the prices are quite low at the shipping point. In Maine, however, there are sizable stocks of potatoes.

FOOD CLIPS

Fruit cocktail is one of the few fruit mixtures to be standardized by Federal law. Peaches and pears make up the greater part of the mixture, but there are definite proportions of pineapples, grapes and cherries also, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture marketing specialists.

* * *

Extra heavy sirup in canned fruits means what it says.....it is the sweetest, thickest sugar sirup used. And, the heavier the sirup, the more costly the item.

* * *

Most canned fruits are also packed in light, heavy, or extra heavy sirups, in water--in slightly sweetened water, or in fruit juices. Read the label.

* * *

Don't forget that lower grades of fruits, while not as sweet or as uniform in appearance as the higher grades, are a thrifty buy and good for use in frozen desserts.

* * *

What are "bush berries?" Some people also call them "cane berries." They are referring to blackberries, boysenberries, dewberries, loganberries, or even youngberries.

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